

# What It Costs to Dine in New York To-day

By WILLIS STEELL.

As he passes the brilliant lights of Pierre's and Sherry's, or the more subdued splendor of Del's and the Ritz, the weary bookkeeper on his way to cold mutton at home may nourish the hope that one day he may dine in one of these rich restaurants. Conscious of the rattle of the few pieces of silver in his pocket—all he has been able to save for his own needs out of the family budget—he sighs to himself:

"It costs like the mischief to dine out in New York!"

But does it? After all there are so many places offering the cook or the housewife a night off, from the vulgar "good eats" place through the choice of cafeterias to the modest but appetizing restaurant, that is is surprising more families do not adopt the sensible European custom of once a week patronizing some restaurant, if only for a change. I fancy that the uninterrupted yearly round of home dining is due to our overweening ambition; we would rather stay away from restaurants unless we can go to the highest priced of them all.

Before going into the figures to learn how much the gourmet spends on his food it may be as well to say that the humble feeder is unable to supply his table economically nowadays. A beefsteak, for an instance (excluding chuck varieties), is still priced like a luxury. Chops, lamb or pork, come high. Ask any housekeeper, poor, well to do or really rich, and she will tell you that in the long run it is cheaper to board than to keep house.

What does the ordinary fellow with a wife and two children pay for his dinner at home? Let us take for granted that he does not affect canned stuff, but does want a fresh vegetable, a salad, meat or fowl, and on Friday a good sized chunk of cod or halibut. This is a simple but very ordinary menu, nevertheless it cannot be provided for less than from \$4.50 to \$5 daily.

## "Raw Materials" Cost \$55.

Averaging his breakfast (for the family) of cereal, fruit, eggs, bacon or country sausage and coffee at \$2, and luncheon, made up of scraps for the wife and children (while he gets it downtown for fifty cents), at \$1.25, then the said ordinary citizen who has no gastronomic tastes is obliged to pay out for the raw materials which supply his table over \$55 a week.

To meet the needs of this particular class, who are mainly flat dwellers in very respectable quarters of the city, there have sprung up a number of restaurants of an entirely new class. They call themselves by odd but appealing names such as Grandma's Dining Room, Tumble Inn, Duck Inn, et al., and their habitat is often in the basement of an apartment house or the first floor of a business building not too far away from an apartment house section.

Attractive as these places are, and they are very much so, varying in style from the modern painted furniture to old mahogany with real silver and pretty china for the service, their genuine worth is in the food supplied. It is excellent and ample and the price, usually \$1.25 being asked for a dinner, is almost astonishingly moderate. All these new places claim that they serve "home cooking," and the claim justifies itself to anybody who knows what home cooking means.

The man can dine himself, his wife and two youngsters for \$5, a considerable saving of money and even more of "nerves."

It ought to be denied at once, I think, that these dinners bear the remotest likeness to the table d'hôte dinners under foreign names that are to be found all over the city. No, that bowl of oleaginous soup, small and ancient fish, tough chicken and yellow lettuce with a dessert of unknown cheese, Neapolitan (so called) ice cream and chicory isn't a bit like the dinner served by the New England and Southern women who have come to the rescue of unhappy New York.

So much for the home feeders and the restaurant diners of the great middle class.

They pay more than they can perhaps afford, but in revenge they eat fresh, nourishing food.

## \$7 to \$10 to Eat at Swell Place.

What about the great and famous restaurants and hotels? Does it cost a "fortune" to dine at Pierre's, Sherry's the Waldorf, the Plaza, Delmonico's, the Flotilla?

In at least three of the "big" dining rooms named above it is possible for a man to choose for himself out of a rich variety a good and abundant dinner which will cost him from \$7 to \$10. For either amount it may comprise a hors d'oeuvre, oysters, soup, fish, meat, vegetable, salad, dessert and coffee.

But he will get nothing to drink but

torial, prices there have fallen considerably since the war and may be said to be at normal. No attempt has been made to keep them up to offset a decline in revenue due to the discarding of the wine list. Wines, said the same authority, never gave great profit. Champagne in the history of the hotel had increased from the '80's to the last year when it could be profitably retailed from \$3.50 to \$10 per quart, but at either price the margin of profit was small.

In two of the larger modern hotels, the Pennsylvania and the Commodore, it is possible to get a range of prices, but all pretty steep ones which vary somewhat, according to whether you prefer to eat above or below ground. In the Commodore if you do not care to dine on the main

they are better able to do so now than when rough and ready drinking preceded dinner. I anticipate that for America some dishes will eventually be dropped from the menu.

"As to how much it costs a genuine bon vivant to dine now and how much it cost him to dine yesterday—that is, before prohibition—there is no way to mark the difference. Truth to say there exists no difference, for the true bon vivant dines as an art, and for an art there is no question of money.

"I have watched with amusement the efforts of a few mistaken persons to correct the bill of fare, as they term it, but as we call it the menu, putting all French dishes into English. It is an impossible thing to do and far from desirable.

"Admitting that it is better to call all dishes by good English names, capable of being understood by English speaking people rather than to put them in a strange tongue, the bad French that Frenchmen do not understand, still there are names that cannot be translated, and if they were would lose all meaning. It is the same with your national dishes, famous American dishes; their names cannot be carried over into a foreign language. Imagine corned beef and cabbage being translated into French!

"Many of the French names of dishes have a history and an association that it would be a kind of crime to deprive them of. When we speak of the delicate sauce Bechamel we recall its inventor, Marquis Bechamel, and in the instances of Maintenon cutlets or filet de poulet a la Pompadour we think in calling them of the names of those ladies who invented the combinations. Some dishes have been dreamed of while their inventors looked at a beautiful work of art. The popular sorbet that bears the name of the composer Donizetti was thought of by an Italian cook while he was listening to the opera 'Lucia di Lammermoor.' Ah, in too many cases part of the charm of a dish would be lost if its name did not summon up the conditions under which it was composed!"

It was M. Titze's opinion that two persons might dine delicately and poetically with every human want, palate, digestion, &c., provided for, at the small outlay of 100 francs, that is, normally, \$20.

There is a good deal of social feasting going on in New York this season just as formerly, but if you read the social doings columns in the newspapers you will see that when people give dinners before the opera or debutante party, &c., they are quite in the mode when they take their guests to one or other of the best liked restaurants. Occasionally, however, they do ask guests to their homes, and when they do there is nothing Lucullan about the feast they spread. It is, in fact, good form now to make the dinner quite simple in food and appointments.

## Christmas Books

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phonse Daudet. The scene is a war hospital in Bavaria, in the days of the Franco-Prussian war. Here are two Frenchmen, Salvette and Bernadou, provincials from the same village, enrolled in the same battalion and wounded by the same shell. Salvette is gaining strength daily, but Bernadou plainly will not recover. "Between the wan curtains of his hospital cot his face looks thinner, more languid day by day." As Christmas draws near his one insistent longing is for a few sous with which to buy a white roll and a bottle of claret: "How happy I would be, if once more, before taps sound for me, I could drink with you over the Yule log." Now Salvette has in his jacket lining a forty franc note that is to pay his way home when once over the border. But poor Bernadou is ill, dying. So he changes his money, buys the bottle of claret, the white rolls and some sprays of holly, and Bernadou has his last wish gratified of drinking once more with his friend on Christmas and hears once more the words of an old provencal carol. And then he sinks back and the flame of life flickers out and the holly slips down from the pillow to rest upon his brow. A simple, almost naive story but quite perfect in its delicate art.

## Dinner Menu of the Fifth Avenue Hotel for August 23, 1859.

### SOUPS.

Green Turtle. Barley.

### FISH.

Boiled Salmon, shrimp sauce. Baked Bass, wine sauce.

### BOILED.

Leg of Mutton, caper sauce. Chicken, with Pork.

Calf's Head, brain sauce. Beef Tongue.

Turkey, oyster sauce. Corn Beef and Cabbage.

### COLD DISHES.

Ham, Roast Beef, Pressed Corn Beef, Tongue.

Lobster Salad, Boned Turkey with Truffles.

### ENTREES.

Fricassee Chicken a la Chevaliere.

Macaroni, Parmesan.

Lamb Cutlets, breaded.

Oysters, fried in crumbs.

Currie of Veal, in border of rice.

Queen Fritters.

Kidneys, champagne sauce.

Pigeons, en compote.

Sweetbreads larded, green peas.

### ROASTS.

Beef. Lamb, mint sauce.

Loin of Veal, stuffed. Goose.

Turkey. Chicken.

Ham, champagne sauce.

### VEGETABLES.

Mashed Potatoes. Boiled Potatoes. Boiled Rice.

Baked Potatoes. Stewed Tomatoes. Squash.

Turnips. Cabbage. Beans.

### PASTRY.

Sponge Cake Pudding. Apple Pies. Madeira Jelly.

Peach Pies. Peach Meringues. Squash Pies.

Gateaux Modernes. Cols de Cygne.

### DESSERT.

Raisins. Almonds. Peaches. English Walnuts.

Pecan Nuts. Filberts. Bartlett Pears.

Citron Melons. Watermelons.

Vanilla, Lemon Ice Cream.

The old Fifth Avenue Hotel, opened in 1859, was criticized for, and advertised by, its high charges. The rate was \$2.50 a day, American plan. The above menu is not of an exceptional dinner, but simply a sample of the fare that was served every day.

water unless he brought it in himself, and that custom is being frowned down upon as vulgar by his own crowd and as illegal by the police.

At the Flotilla prices run higher, but the aim of this novel restaurant was stated at the opening to be to exact the very highest cost for the food it offered. That it intended to exact this of the townfolk and not depend on strangers was demonstrated by its abrupt closing for the summer just at the time when there is an influx of strangers.

The total of \$10 for a dinner at the other swaggar restaurants is obtained from the menu card of each one. "Fancy" dishes were not included. The fish item is but our well known friend the sole and the meat is roast beef or roast lamb. By substituting guinea hen and Virginia ham or venison for this and alligator pear for simple lettuce, and so on, it would be easy to swell the cost of an individual dinner to \$20 or thereabouts, but beyond this it would puzzle one to go, in the absence of wines.

As a matter of fact, according to the famous Oscar, whose life has been inextricably bound up with the Waldorf-Ast-

floor you have a choice of two others underground. When it is remembered that the manager is George Sweeney, under whom the Ansonia enjoyed its greatest reputation as a delicate caterer, it will be assured the food in all three dining rooms is of fine quality. If your palate requires special titillating, however, you will pay about as much there for the process as you would at Del's.

## Anglicized Menu Criticized.

Theodore Titze, maitre d'hotel of Sherry's, on Park avenue, holds the opinion that more Americans are learning every day what delicate feasting means. There was a time when some of us stultified our palates by a series of cocktails before dining and a continual stream of whisky and white rock during dinner so that we never discriminated a flavor or aroma. It was like the huge draught of vodka customarily taken by the peasant in Russia before eating; after it he was unconscious what he ate.

"It is true," said Mr. Titze, "that in the absence of the correct accompanying wine certain dishes do not fulfill their complete mission of refreshment and delight, but